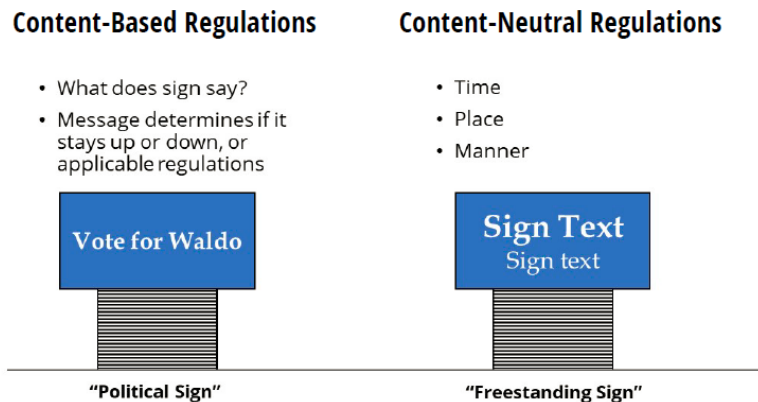


Frequently Asked Questions Sign Bylaw Zoning Amendments

Why is the Sign Bylaw zoning amendments important to Arlington? Dating back to the [Zoning Audit](#) prepared for the Master Plan in 2015 and a [second Audit](#) prepared as part of the recodification process in 2017, concerns regarding usability and clarity as well as inconsistencies with the Supreme Court case [Reed v. Town of Gilbert](#) were identified. As such, the Town contracted with Lisa Wise Consulting (LWC) to draft new sign regulations that are well-organized, straightforward to understand and administer, consistent with state and federal law, and representative of best practices. To date, LWC and staff interviewed stakeholders, held a public forum, provided a draft analysis, discussed the analysis with Redevelopment Board members, provided an Analysis and Recommendations Report, and drafted amendments. The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) is overseeing this process with input and assistance from the Town's Zoning Bylaw Working Group and Town Counsel.

What is the importance of Reed v. Town of Gilbert? The importance of the *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* case is to ensure that all regulations for permanent and temporary signs are legally-defensible and consistent with applicable federal and State requirements. The Supreme Court case determined that in order to be content-neutral, the sign regulations must be based on "time, place, and manner" restrictions, rather than by making distinctions based on the message the sign conveys. These restrictions, as the name suggests, limit the length of time, the manner, and place or location of a sign as shown below:



How will the proposed revision of the Sign Bylaw address this problem? The proposed amendment of the sign section of the Zoning Bylaw will create content-neutral regulations that will not run afoul of First Amendment rights. The revisions make the Bylaw more modern, clear, and easy to use by all. The revisions create consistency across zoning districts to facilitate review by DPCD and Inspectional Services. Finally, the new standards and illustrations for different property types and sign districts within the Town are included in the new Bylaw section.

What are the proposed amendments? [Article 17](#) is the complete revision of Section 6.2 of the Zoning Bylaw. Starting with stakeholder engagement and a detailed review of the existing Sign Bylaw, LWC prepared a [Sign Regulations Analysis and Recommendations Report](#) which laid the groundwork for the revised bylaw. Although the section has been entirely reorganized, many of the existing standards are carried forward into easy to use tables and illustrations. The revised sign section is outlined as follows:

- Section 6.2.1: General Provisions, including the purpose, authority, and exemptions, among other items;
- Section 6.2.2: Procedures that lay out the process for obtaining a sign permit, a temporary sign permit, and a sign special permit;
- Section 6.2.3: General Restrictions for All Signs, including prohibited signs and location and display restrictions;
- Section 6.2.4: General Requirements for All Signs, including measurement, illumination, installation, and maintenance;
- Section 6.2.5: Standards for Permanent Signs, including standards for each type of building-mounted and freestanding permanent sign and where these types of signs are allowed;
- Section 6.2.6: Standards for Temporary and Portable Signs, including standards for each type of temporary and portable sign and where these types of signs are allowed; and

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- Section 6.2.7: Nonconforming Signs, including how signs that do not meet the requirements of the bylaw are handled.

Definitions in Section 2 of the Zoning Bylaw have been updated and a number of new definitions have been included for clarity. Additionally, Article 26 is a companion article that moves standards for signs out of the Town Bylaw and consolidates those standards into the Zoning Bylaw.

What is the review process for new signs? The review process remains the same as prior, but there are clear instructions in the proposed amendments. A Sign Permit application for a permanent sign must be submitted to Inspectional Services for zoning review and is then referred to DPCD for review. If all standards are met, the Sign Permit is issued. The proposed amendments also clarify the process for a temporary Sign Permit. These proposed amendments help all to understand what is expected for new signage based on the standards developed by type of sign.

What criteria will property and/or business owners need to follow for new signage? It is important for property and/or business owners to understand that zoning districts are grouped into Sign Districts as follows:

Sign District	Zoning Districts
Residential Sign District	Large Lot Single-Family District (R0), Single-Family District (R1), Two-Family District (R2), Three-Family District (R3)
Residential/Business Sign District	Townhouse District (R4), Apartment District/Low Density (R5), Apartment District/Medium Density (R6), Apartment District/High Density (R7), Neighborhood Office District (B1), Neighborhood Business District (B2)
Business Sign District	Major Business District (B2A), Village Business District (B3), Vehicular Oriented Business District (B4), Central Business District (B5)
Industrial Sign District	Industrial District (I), Transportation District (T)
Multi-Use Sign District	Multi-Use District (MU), Planned Unit Development (PUD)
Open Space Sign District	Open Space District (OS)

Based on a property's sign district, certain types of building-mounted and freestanding permanent signs as well as temporary and portable signs are allowed as described. Clear standards and illustrations provide the specific details of each type of sign that a property and/or business owner may want to install. Additionally, if Town Meeting adopts these revisions, DPCD will create a guidebook that also provides clear instruction on the process, what is allowed, and other aesthetic standards that will be helpful for property and/or business owners to understand from the outset of a new sign project.

Not sure which zoning district you are in? You can find your zoning district by searching your address in the [online Property Search](#).

How can I learn more? The Arlington Redevelopment Board will hold hearings on all of the zoning articles on the Town Meeting Warrant on Mondays in March: March 4, March 11, March 18, and March 25. The public hearings will be held in the Senior Center, 27 Maple Street, beginning at 7:30 PM. It is anticipated that the amendments related to multi-family and mixed-use will begin on March 11. Informal office hours will be held on Thursdays, March 14 and March 21, 5 PM-7 PM, in the Town Hall Annex First Floor Conference Room. Finally, the DPCD will also hold neighborhood meetings tentatively scheduled for March 28 at Peirce School, April 3 at Thompson School, April 4 at Hardy School, and April 10 at Brackett School, all beginning at 7 PM. These dates are still pending confirmation from the School Department.